

[Reminiscences—Mr. G. Hale]

Tales-Anecdotes

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview 4

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER A. Fitzpatrick.

ADDRESS 327 East 145th St. Bronx, N. Y. C.

DATE October 20, 1938

SUBJECT REMINISCENCES REMINISCENCES : MR. G. HALE.

1. Date and time of interview October 19, 1938 1. P. M.
2. Place of Interview At Home 322 [?] [West?] 42nd St. City.
3. Name and address of informant George Hale, 322 East 42nd St. City.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. H. Leonard
Mgr. A & P Store. 144th St. & Third Ave.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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Informant resides in a small room on the top floor, rear, in a rooming house at the above address. It is neatly furnished with bed chair and dresser. A washing sink is also in the room. A small rug on the floor. There are clothing stores underneath and on the opposite side of the street is Holy Cross R. C. Church. In the same block, a few doors toward the West, is The [McGraw-Hill?] building.

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NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER A. Fitzpatrick

ADDRESS 327 East 145th St. Bronx N. Y. C.

DATE October 20, 1938

SUBJECT REMINISCENCES REMINISCENCES : MR. G. HALE.

1. Ancestry Irish
2. Place and date of birth Cayuga County, City of Auburn. N. Y. S.
3. Family Family consisted of Wife, Son and Daughter. (Informant is now divorced.)
4. Places lived in, with dates Present address 322 West 42nd St. City. Resided there, three weeks to date. Former address, 324 West 42nd St. 18 months. Prior to latter resided at 463 E. 158th St. three years and for five years previous to that, 367 East 167th St. Bronx.

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5. Education, with dates

Public School and High School Graduate.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Newspaperman, intermittantly, from 1920 to 1934, Free-lance work 1934 to date. Also carpentry off and on. (Non Union).

7. Special skills and interests

Short story writing, Interviewing, mechanics and books.

8. Community and religious activities

Religion, Catholic Active in Parochial affairs

9. Description of informant

About five feet six inches in height. Weight is about 148 lbs. Age 51 ?Exceptionally neat in appearance. Strikes one as above the average in intelligence. Is a deep thinker.

10. Other Points gained in interview

Very cooperative and sociable. Quick to grasp a situation. Quite conversational and although having experienced tragedy in a mismated marriage. (He is divorced since 1935), has evidently adjusted himself to a situation beyond his control.

Despite the foregoing he has a fine head of hair, grey lacking and, although 51 years of age, has the appearance of a man much younger in years.

It may be added that Mr. Hale is a recipient of Home Relief. He has been without steady income for many years.

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The informant's paternal Grandfather, a native of Co. / Limerick, Ireland, arrived in the United States in 1850. He was a Union soldier in the Civil War.

The resultant folk-lore tales were garnered by the Grandson - (the informant) - from his Grandfather who was a great story teller. Mr. Hale states that the stories, two of which are herewith submitted, are true and that he has always had the [?]reatest greatest respect for his Grandfather's veracity and beliefs. Mr. Hale Sen' died in 1926.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER A. Fitzpatrick

ADDRESS 327 East 145th St. Bronx N.Y.C.

DATE October 20, 1938

SUBJECT REMINISCENCES REMINISCENCES : Mr. G. Hale WHAT DID THEY SEE?

"Ireland is too well noted for it's implicit belief in the supernatural, that goes without saying.

There is hardly an Irishman or an Irishwoman that has not had some kind of personal experience of their own, back in the old country. An experience of something uncanny and inexplicable. My Grandfather, I recall, once told me of an incident that had no solution. Here it is; - find the answer yourself.

His folks were well to do, owning a very large farm in Co. / Limerick. Of course he had, as all farmers over there have, some cattle, some sheep, dogs and chickens. He had six

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dogs, two of whom were very ferocious. These two were so vicious that my Grandfather had rings put in their noses by which they were kept tied to the house. At night he released them and God pity the tramp or anyone that tried to get into the property. /.[. ?]/#

One night, about ten o'clock; (my grandfather was still up at the time) the dogs suddenly started to snarl and growl at something they seemed to see in the distance. They suddenly jumped off the porch and ran towards a hedge some 75 feet distant. Well, whatever it was, when they reached the hedge they immediately stopped and turning tail, ran back and into the house, a terrific fear in their eyes and the hair all bristling on their backs with their tails between their legs.

They went under the beds and for two days they could not be budged.

Some weeks later there was a repetition of the same occurrence, but this time there was a development. The horses, (there were two of them), were loose in the grounds. When they saw the dogs running as before, towards the same spot in the hedge, they ran too, but when the dogs, (whatever they saw), set up a howl and turned to run back to the house; the horses jumped the hedge and it is a positive fact, they WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN. My Grandfather requested the neighbors to keep an eye out for them but they had vanished as if into the thin air. There never was an explanation. TOM SHEA AND THE WIDOW

My Grandfather, when he choose, could speak as good English as the next one, but in his story-telling, he would lapse into the dialect of the 'Ould Sod', and one, unfamiliar with the vernacular, might find it difficult to understand. We, as kids always looked forward to the evening, especially in the Winter, when we'd gather around the parlor stove watching the flowing glowing coals through the isinglass door.

At such times, when Grandad was sitting down, all he needed was his old corn-cob pipe and an appreciative audience. After the story was over we'd climb up the steep stairs to a cold bedroom, to dream of fairies bringing a much desired gift or possibly, as

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often happened, to toss about in troubled sleep, trying to escape from the goblins that Grandad's story had created for us.

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We always knew when a story was coming when we'd see him with a sulphur match held over his old pie. He'd take a few tugs, settle back in the old rocker and with one glance at us all, would say, 'And you, Denny Hogan, (a neighbor's boy), 'Wan laugh, or 'een a chuckle and I'll tell ye no more, d'ye moind?'. This threat usually produced the desired effect and when he was assured of a quiet and respectful audience he'd heave a long sigh of contentment and begin the story.

'Known as honest and as foine a man as iver the saints let breathe, and YOU there, Dinny Hogan, ask ye're Father, he knew him too- Tom Shea was a hard workin' man. He was about 40 years ould and lived in a little shack that he built himself.

He had three pigs, 35 chickens, a cow and a horse, but most 'av the time he worked for neighboring farmers. He spent little or no time in the Village, savin' his money and living a quiet life.

He had wan ambition and that was to save enough money to marry the Widow Callaghan, buy a larger farm and raise children. He always contributed to the Church and it's charities, attended the Masses, helped his fellow man and in general was an upright God-fearing man.

Adjacent to Tom's place was a much larger farm with a much bigger house. Was it vacant because it's tenants migrated to America. It's real owner, an absentee English Landlor Landlord , was reputed to be a cruel, greedy miser, determined to get the last cent from the poor tenants.

Well, to own this place was Tom's long cherished dream. If he secured it he could ask the Widow-Callaghan for her hand. Now we're coming to it. Wan night, after a particularly

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hard day in the field, he retired early to bed and had hardly gotten to sleep when a voice whispered in his ear; 'Tom, —Tom, 4 wake up and go to the cliff'.

At first he was too tired to be aroused but finally the voice became louder and more insistent and after hearing the voice three times, Tom got up dressed and with the voice still ringing in his ears he left the house. There was only wan place that he could go and wan place that could have been meant, so Tom went there.

He stood on the brink of the cliff in the light of a full moon wondering what to do next, when a voice coming from somewhere down below —hollered 'Help me. Help me! Well, being well acquainted with the nature of the cliff, Tom knew of a spot, about 200 feet down, where the voice seemed to be calling for help and the ledge could only be reached by goin' down to the bottom and climbing up a long narrow pathway. So he started off.

It was a long tedious journey, goin' all the way down and half way up, but eventually he finally reached the spot and what did he find? There was white haired old man, lying prostrate on the rocky ledge, blood oozing from numerous cuts and in a bad way.

He carried him back, a task that took him several hours, to his shack, hitched his horse to the shay and went to the village to the Doctor. The Doctor, after examining him found that he had broken leg in addition to his many wounds. He told Tom to take him back to his shack and, under no circumstances to move him, promising that he would call on him the next day and every day until he had recovered sufficiently to return to his own home.

Tom took him home as ordered, and put him to bed and a few days after he was recovered enough to talk. He identified himself as the absentee landlord of the place that Tom had so long coveted and desired. It seems that he had arrived in the village to look over his property had lost his way and unfortunately fell over the cliff.

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After a number of weeks, convalescing at Tom's place he was a new man again. He learned of Tom's desire to town the property and in a feeling of gratitude for the care that he had received at Tom's hands gave him the property, free and clear, for his very own. Of course I need not say that Tom went for the Widow, hell bent for leather, and in a short time after a hasty courtship they got married, raised a nice family and as the sayin' goes, 'Lived happily ever after.'

But Tom, to this day, knew that he never would have gotten anywhere if it was'nt for the voice of the little man that woke him out of his sleep that night and, knowin' of his desires and his ambitions, set out to help him. Maybe the same little man made the landlord fall over the cliff. What do you think?

***** 6 THE LITTLE COBBLERS

Here is another tale that I remember hearing my Grandad tell.

I cannot recall the place where he said that it happened. It was somewhere out in the West of Ireland, if I remember rightly.

It appears that there was a family by the name of McGuiness. They owned a little farm of about thirty acres and not such a lot of stock, just a few chickens, a horse, a few pigs and a cow. The family consisted of the husband, James, his wife and five children. They were anything but well-to-do, starving most of the time. Things went from bad to worse, and the husband, from worrying, fell sick and died.

The widow decided to carry on for the sake of the children and did manage to get by, through being frugal and thrifty. But she never could buy anything, like clothes, shoes and such-like, that were nescessary to a large family like hers.

Of course she could patch up the children's clothes when it was needed, which was almost all of the time, but their shoes were what worried her most. And they were in bad shape,

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what with the holes in them and being lopsided at the heel, and some without any sole at all.

One night, after the children were all put to bed, she looked at their shoes and the tears came into her eyes. What could she do? The summertime was all right for the tots. They could run around barefooted and no harm would befall them, but here was winter only a few weeks away and she didn't want them catching a heavy cold which might develop into something more serious, that eventually might mean opening the grave and putting them alongside her beloved husband, James.

In desperation she sat down and tried to figure a way out. Then, suddenly, a thought came to her. She had once heard that the little men, the Leprechauns, were cobblers by trade, and if they knew of her plight they surely would help her. Anyway, she knelt down and with all the faith and sincerity in her voice she told them of her situation and begged them to help her.

She was so sincere in her plea that something within her assured her, somehow, that her prayer would be answered. With light heart she started to sweep up the kitchen floor, which, as most Irishmen in the rural districts in Ireland know, was just the simple earth. She wanted the place to be clean when the little men arrived, as she surely knew they would.

She went to the cupboard, and although there wasn't much there, she fixed up a little meal for the fairies in case they were hungry. And then, after putting two fresh candles on the table, she took the five little pairs of dilapidated shoes and a worn pair of her own and placed them in front of the fire. This done, she went in a happy mood to bed, to await the results that the morning would bring.

During the night, she fancied she heard the strains of soft music down below in the kitchen. But thinking she was dreaming, she went to sleep again. Again she woke up with the music in her ears, and unable to sleep further, and with a bit of curiosity curiosity in

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her mind, she got out of bed and tiptoed to the head of the stairs. Then not able to restrain her curiosity further, softly came down, step by step, noticing that the music seemed to be getting louder.

The door to the kitchen was closed when she reached it. She pushed it open a crack and peeked in, and lo and behold! what did she see? The candles had all burned out but the room was full of a strange light—where it came from, she couldn't see—and right in the middle of the floor, dancing around six new pairs of shoes, were forty or maybe fifty little fairies, having the time of their lives. On the table were all the plates—where she had piled the food—empty. She stood spellbound for quite awhile and, knowing that if she went into the room she'd break the spell and perhaps cause hard luck to fall on her, she went softly back to her room. In the morning, when she came down, t 8 there were the new shoes, just as she saw them during the night—and the marks of little feet in the earthen floor, all around them.

Needless to say, to the day of her death, she will always uphold the Leprechauns and list them first in her category of friends.
